

# Project Proposal

**Proposal Title:** Ray Mesa II Fuels Reduction and Vegetative Restoration

**Proposal Number:** 1403

**DWR Region:** Southeastern Region

**Lead Agency:** BLM

**County:** San Juan

**Project Manager:** Brian Keating

**PM Phone:** 4356133717

**Regional Priority:** Within Focus Area

**Project Type:** Terrestrial Habitat

**Proposed Start Date:** 10/1/2009

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**Project Location:** The area proposed for treatment is approximately seven miles east of the town of La Sal, Utah, in San Juan County

**Project Description:** BLM will utilize a combination of hand cutting/piling, bullhog/mastication, and ATV seeding on 612 acres to reduce fuel loads and enhance wildlife habitat.

**Description of Problem/Need:** The Pine Ridge area in which the Ray Mesa II project is located has one of the highest lightning caused fire frequencies of BLM managed lands in the Moab Field Office. Recently, development of the area has resulted in numerous private homes interfaced with the vegetation, which has elevated the fire hazard. In 2004, the BLM completed the Ray Mesa I project in which 376 acres of pinyon/juniper and Ponderosa pine forests were thinned with a bullhog and then later underburned. In addition, oil and gas development on in the Ray Mesa area has led to a significant increase in vehicle traffic, which has elevated the possibility for noxious weed establishment. In many areas, pinyon and juniper trees have increased in density leading to and increased fuel hazard and have displaced ground cover such as grasses and shrubs. Lastly, areas that were once open sagebrush communities have experienced pinyon/juniper encroachment, which is leading to a loss of vegetative diversity and wildlife habitat.

Previous to thinning treatments, the area had very little to no understory vegetation due to high densities of pinyon/juniper trees. Following treatment, native grasses and shrubs have sprouted and are currently providing a healthy understory. The goal of treating vegetation is to restore ecosystem health by reproducing the natural variability, stability, and diversity of the vegetative communities within the project area. In addition, successfully completed treatments enhance public and firefighter safety by providing an increased range of suppression strategies.

**Objectives:** The Moab Fire Zone and Moab Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) propose to reduce vegetative fuels and implement vegetative/habitat restoration activities within an approximate 6,500-acre project area of public lands administered by the BLM. The goals of the proposed fuels reduction and vegetative restoration treatments would focus on: 1) Protect wildland interface communities, 2) Reduce fuel loading, 3) Create fuel breaks, 4) Enhance wildlife habitat, and 5) Restore vegetative communities in a mosaic pattern across the project area.

**Relevance to Strategic Plans:** The WAP focus areas are the same as the UPCD focus areas. Ray Mesa falls within one of the WAP focus areas of SE Utah. The proposed action for the Ray Mesa II Project is derived from The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), which guides all BLM resource management actions. Other national policies which direct and guide management actions include The National Fire Plan, Healthy Forest Restoration Act and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act 1978 to name a few. In addition, the proposed action is consistent with the 2008 Moab Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Moab Fire Zone Fire Management Plan.

**Potential Risks:** A delay in seeding and fuels reduction on Ray Mesa II project area would continue to place the communities, natural vegetation and wildlife habitat at risk from the effects of a catastrophic wildfire and/or noxious weed invasion.

**Proposed Methods:** Thinning treatments implemented by the BLM would utilize a combination of hand cutting and bullhog or mechanical shredder. The objectives would create an assortment of mixed-density pinyon/juniper groupings with treatments ranging from no cutting to the complete removal of pinyon/juniper trees. Various activities would be continued in unit increments until all targeted vegetation within the project area had received treatment, although areas with existing sagebrush and/or native grasses would be avoided. Project objectives of greater spacing, open sage meadows and light surface fuels would be the encouragement of understory growth, the reduced potential for high-intensity fire, and the protection of cultural resources.

ATV broadcast application of seed on 100 acres would occur in the fall of 2009. Mechanical removal (bullhog, hand thin & pile and lop & scatter) on 612 acres would follow or precede the seed application. It is anticipated that the vegetative thinning and seeding for the first phase of treatment units would be completed no later than June 2010.

Following thinning activities, areas at high risk to noxious weed invasion (along major travel corridors) would be identified for seeding. Additional areas associated with an on-going research project would also be seeded to evaluate treatment effectiveness and future needs. Treatments identified for seeding would be accomplished prior to or following thinning activities and would consist of both native and selected non-native grasses, forbs and browse species. Seed selection is based upon the most current data regarding the establishment of species likely to promote successional changes toward the desired vegetative community. Seeded portions of the treatment area would be rested from grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons following seeding.

Due to scope and complexity of the project area, combined with budgetary constraints, treatments would be identified and implemented over a number of years.

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**Shapefile Name:** HPD 2010\GIS Shape Files - Proposals\SER\1403.shp

**Seed Source:** GBRC

**UPCD Reg Team Coord Date:** 1/20/2009

Monday, March 16, 2009 11:31:33 AM

# Project Proposal

**Proposed  
NEPA Action:**

**Proposed  
Arch Action:**

☒ **Vegetation Monitoring**      ☐ **Wildlife Monitoring**

**Monitoring Information:** The BLM fuels program will utilize a series of rangeland plots and fuel transects to monitor the effectiveness of the fuels treatments and subsequent revegetation treatments. In addition, the Ray Mesa II area has a number of historical rangeland trend plots, which will be monitored and incorporated into future monitoring activities. All monitoring activities will involve quantitative and qualitative techniques and be repeated annually for the first three years following treatment. All research studies will result in reports, which will be available for other agencies and partners.

If USDA research funds are awarded to University of Colorado, we plan to conduct the first round of sampling after treatments have been conducted and the enclosure constructed. We request that subsequent monitoring efforts be conducted by UDWR in conjunction with their existing range monitoring program.

**Grazing Management:** The Ray Mesa II project is part of the Lisbon allotment within the Moab Field Office. The allotment is rather large in size and the portions affected by the proposed treatment would be put into a rest period for a period of at least two years following the application of seed or until management goals have been met.

## SPECIES BENEFITING

Elk	Mule Deer	Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Allen's Big-eared Bat
Fringed Myotis	Spotted Bat	Abert's Squirrel	

## LAND OWNERSHIP

Owner	Acres
BLM	612
<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>

## PROPOSED FUNDING

Source	Amount Requested	Date Approved	Amount Approved
BLM ARRA	\$5,000.00	3/12/2009	\$5,000.00
BLM FLR	\$434,406.00		\$0.00
Unfunded Balance	\$2,817.00		\$0.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$442,223.00</b>		<b>\$5,000.00</b>

## PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Description	DWR Account	Partner Contrib.
Archaeological Survey		\$0.00	\$99,000.00
Contractual Services	183 acres of bullhog	\$0.00	\$45,750.00
Seed (GBRC)	\$78/acre for 100 acres	\$7,817.00	\$0.00
NEPA		\$0.00	\$8,000.00
Monitoring		\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Contractual Services	429 acres thin & pile	\$0.00	\$251,206.00
Contractual Services	100 acres of ATV harrow	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Contractual Services	429 acres of pile burning	\$0.00	\$21,450.00
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$7,817.00</b>	<b>\$434,406.00</b>

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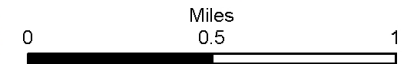


# Ray Mesa II Project Area (2176 Acres)

## UPCD Proposal Map

State of Utah

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Created December 4, 2008  
Gabriel J. Bissonette

### LEGEND

- Municipality
- Ray Mesa Units (Completed)
- Ray Mesa II Units (Proposed)
- Ray Mesa II Project Area
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- US Forest Service (USFS)
- State
- Private (white)

